

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L JAKARTA 9753

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINS, PEPR, ID, PP
SUBJECT: GOI ACTIVITIES IN EAST TIMOR AND WEST IRIAN

REF: STATE 180891

1. DURING COURSE OF DINNER FOR GENERAL TIGHE LAST NIGHT, GENERAL MURDANI AND I RETIRED TO SEPARATE ROOM FOR EXTENSIVE CHAT ON EAST TIMOR AND IRIAN JAYA. I REVIEWED OUR CONCERNS ALONG LINES SET FORTH REFTTEL. MURDANI LISTENED ATTENTIVELY WITHOUT INTERRUPTING ME, ONLY REVEALING AFTERWARD THAT HE HAD ALREADY RECEIVED FULL INFORMAL REPORT OF ASSISTANT SECRETARY HOLBROOKE'S AND DAS OAKLEY'S CONVERSATION WITH AMBASSADOR ASHARI. (ASHARI'S FORMAL REPORT WILL NOT, HOWEVER, REACH FONDEPT UNTIL TODAY, MURDANI SAID.)

2. RESPONDING TO MY REMARKS ON EAST TIMOR, MURDANI ACKNOWLEDGED THAT FORCE OF BRIGADE STRENGTH HAD BEEN SENT TO CENTRAL AREA TO REINFORCE TROOPS WHICH HERETOFORE HAD BEEN ABLE ONLY TO PROVIDE SECURITY FOR COMMUNICATIONS LINE. HE PREFERRED TO DESCRIBE THEIR
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ROLE AS "MOPPING UP OPERATION" RATHER THAN "MAJOR MILITARY CAMPAIGN" AND NOTED IT WAS LIMITED TO SMALL GEOGRAPHIC AREA. HE SAID THIS MILITARY STEP WAS NECESSARY IF THE GOI WERE TO PROCEED RAPIDLY WITH PROVINCE'S DEVELOPMENT. HE ADDED JOURNALISTS ACCOMPANYING PRESIDENT AND ASEAN AMBASSADORS ON RECENT TRIP HAD TRAVELED AROUND COUNTRY AND WOULD CONFIRM

GENERAL PEACEFULNESS. CABINET HAD PREVIOUS DAY ALSO APPROVED PROPOSAL TO INVITE OTHER AMBASSADORS TO ACCOMPANY FONMIN ON VISIT TO EAST TIMOR, PERHAPS IN SEPTEMBER, AND THIS WOULD PROVIDE FURTHER OPPORTUNITY FOR ON-THE-SPOT OBSERVATIONS. CABINET HAD AT THAT TIME ALSO INSTRUCTED GARUDA TO BEGIN REGULAR AIR SERVICE TO DILI. HE RECONFIRMED INTENTION TO PERMIT CRS OPERATIONS THERE.

3. TURNING TO IRIAN JAYA, MURDANI EMPHASIZED THAT GOI HAD FOR 45 DAYS ABSTAINED FROM USING FORCE TO RECOVER SIX REMAINING HOSTAGES, ALTHOUGH THEY FEARED GREATLY FOR THEIR LIVES SINCE THERE WAS EVIDENCE TWO HELICOPTER PILOTS HAD BEEN SUMMARILY KILLED. WHEN NEGOTIATIONS PROVED FUTILE, HOWEVER, GOI HAD NO OTHER RECOURSE. SMALL NUMBER OF TROOPS HAD SUBSEQUENTLY BEEN SENT TO AREA WITH HELICOPTERS, HE CONTINUED. SOME HAD CROSSED PNG BORDER BUT THIS WAS DEFINITELY INADVERTENT AS BORDERS WERE NOT WELL MARKED. TROOPS WERE SUPPORTED BY TWO OV-10 AIRCRAFT. HE BELIEVED THAT "BOMBINGS OF VILLAGES" WAS UNFAIR DESCRIPTION OF OV-10 MISSION. WHILE HE DID NOT EXCLUDE POSSIBILITY THAT SOME BOMBS WERE DROPPED (HE SAID HE WOULD CHECK), PRIMARY WEAPON FOR OV-10 WAS 7.62 MM MACHINEGUN. MURDANI ACKNOWLEDGED THAT ARMED INTERVENTION ALWAYS INVOLVED SOME RISK TO NON-COMBATANTS. HE EMPHASIZED, HOWEVER, THAT SOLE PURPOSE OF OPERATION WAS TO OBTAIN RELEASE OF HOSTAGES, CONFIDENTIAL

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AMONG WHOM WAS LOCAL PROTESTANT PASTOR AS WELL AS MILITARY PERSONNEL.

4. WHEN I NOTED THAT I HAD BEEN INSTRUCTED TO BRING OUR CONCERNS ALSO TO ATTENTION OF MINISTER OF DEFENSE JUSUF, MURDANI SAID THAT, GIVEN JUSUF'S HEAVY SCHEDULE, EARLY MEETING MIGHT BE DIFFICULT TO ARRANGE. HE, HOWEVER, HAD APPOINTMENT WITH JUSUF EARLY NEXT MORNING (TODAY) TO INFORM HIM OF AMBASSADOR ASHARI'S REPORT ON HIS WASHINGTON CONVERSATION AND OFFERED TO BRIEF HIM FULLY ON MY REMARKS AS WELL. I ACCEPTED THIS OFFER. COMMENT: AS DEPARTMENT IS AWARE, MURDANI HAS IN PAST SERVED AS ACCURATE CHANNEL OF COMMUNICATION WITH HIGHEST ECHELONS. I BELIEVE THIS IS FASTEST, MOST EFFECTIVE WAY OF GETTING OUR MESSAGE TO JUSUF AND, UNLESS OTHERWISE INSTRUCTED, DO NOT INTEND TO SEEK SEPARATE APPOINTMENT AT THIS TIME.

5. MURDANI CALLED ME LATE THIS MORNING (JULY 20) TO SAY THAT HE HAD RELATED MY REMARKS AND ASHARI'S REPORT TO MINISTER JUSUF. JUSUF HAD EXPRESSED APPRECIATION FOR THIS EXPOSITION OF OUR CONCERN. JUSUF ALSO POINTED OUT THAT GOI WAS DETERMINED

TO SECURE RELEASE OF THE SIX REMAINING HOSTAGES AND TO RESTORE
ORDER TO EAST TIMOR.
GARDNER

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